

VA CHICAGO LINKS

Volume 11, Issue 8
June 2 - June 15, 2003

Transition News

- The future of VA Chicago is on display in the West Side atrium and Lakeside lobby. Large models depict what the West Side campus will look like in several years after construction of the patient bed tower is completed.
- Personalized letters to inform patients about the transition of inpatient services will be mailed this month to every veteran who has used VA Chicago within the past three years. The mass mailing will be sent to over 60,000 patients.
- A Move Committee has been established to assure that all moves during the transition are properly coordinated. All services that require telephone equipment, furnishings or equipment to be moved or relocated must complete a VACHS move request form.
- Inpatient beds from Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation will be consolidated at West Side (6-South) effective July 17.
- A "mock move" is being planned for Thursday, June 26 as part of preparations for the August 7 transition. Volunteers will act as patients being moved from Lakeside to West Side.

Transition: One Nurse's Story

by **Walterine Brooks, LPN**

The transition of Inpatient Services will require several hundred staff members to relocate between Lakeside and West Side by August 7. Several employees have already changed job sites. Walterine Brooks from Nursing Service talks about how the move affected her.

I'll admit that, at first, I was very leery about coming to the West Side campus. I was comfortable with my job at Lakeside and I simply did not want to change.

Lakeside closed the unit I was working on (12-East) and its employees were provided with a list of available positions at both Lakeside and West Side. We were asked to put down our preferences. My preference was to stay at Lakeside, but those positions went to some nurses with more seniority than me.

I ended up taking a position at West Side on 7-North treating Oncology patients. I was expecting the worst. I had heard stories that staff at West Side were rude and that it was not a pleasant working environment. I was nervous about being the only Lakeside nurse to transfer to that unit on my shift and didn't expect staff at West Side to be helpful at all.

From the very beginning, though, I could see I was wrong. People

were very welcoming and receptive. The nurse manager, the other staff, the ward clerk – everybody – went out of their way to be helpful. I was also surprised that the area surrounding West Side was much more gentrified than I had expected.

Some of my old friends at Lakeside are now going through the same process and will be working at West Side after the transition. Many of them have already visited to familiarize themselves with West Side so they will be better prepared for the move. I tell them to keep an open mind. People are people, whether they are at West Side or Lakeside, and if you are receptive to them, they will be receptive to you.

Discount Coupons

The Chicago White Sox are offering half-price seats for its annual Government Employee Nights on Wednesday, June 18 against the Boston Red Sox and on Tuesday, August 5 against the Kansas City Royals. Coupons for the discounted tickets are available in the Voluntary Service at both Lakeside and West Side and the public affairs office at West Side.

Six Flags Great America and the Wisconsin Dells also offer discounted coupons available in the Recreation Service Display near the West Side auditorium, as well as the Voluntary Service and public affairs office.

VA CHICAGO LINKS

Key Nursing Staff Recognized

VA Chicago honored its entire nursing staff during National Nurses Week (May 5 – 9) and even printed up t-shirts proclaiming “VA Chicago: Nursing United to Provide Excellent Care.”

During a ceremony held that week, awards were presented to recognize the performance of Patient Care Coordinators as well as other nursing staff members, including:

- **Mary Ann Dignan**,
Outstanding Performance
CNS
- **Stephanie Murray**,
Outstanding Performance
RN
- **Betty Struden**,
Outstanding Performance
LPN
- **Emma Stokes**,
Outstanding Performance
CAN

Greater Enforcement of Non-Smoking Policies Planned

New signage directing smokers to “designated smoking areas” has been placed near building entrances at VA Chicago to reduce the risk of smoke entering the buildings and assure that patients, visitors and staff do not have to pass through a cloud of smoke when entering our facilities.

VA Chicago recently convened a Smoking Control Task Force, which has recommended installing four different signs to inform smokers about the designated smoking areas. New signage will include the following:

- No Smoking/No Loitering – Violators subject to arrest and \$50 fine
- Designated Smoking Area
- No Smoking Beyond this Point – Violators subject to arrest and \$50 fine
- Smoking Area This Way (with directional arrow)

VA Police will begin to strictly enforce non-smoking policies. Employees are encouraged to assist with enforcement efforts by reporting violators to VA Police or sending an e-mail message to Octavia Davis, Safety Manager, to report areas where illegal smoking is occurring.

PAS Employee Places Second in Law Day Poetry Contest

Antoinette Spencer, Patient Administration Service, placed second in the First Annual Illinois Law Day Poetry Writing Contest sponsored by VA Regional Counsel. Six other VA Chicago staff members also submitted entries in the statewide competition. Following (in the column at right) is Ms. Spencer’s poem:

Civil Rights

by Antoinette Spencer

My mother is freedom of speech.
My father is right to assemble.
I am the Civil Rights movement.
I was born in the 1950’s at
Ebenezer Church, on the streets of
Mississippi and the Montgomery
Buses.
Dr. King, Rosa Parks and Malcom
X used my mother every second of
the day.
I was baptized by water hoses,
attack dogs and violence.
I stood, marched and sat-in where I
wasn’t allowed by law.
My forefathers stood in Freedom
Hall and planted the seeds so all
Americans could speak, write and
assemble to change our lives for
the better.
My mother is freedom of speech.
My father is the right to assemble.
I am America.

Juneteenth Celebration

VA Chicago’s Black Employment Program Committee is sponsoring a “Juneteenth” celebration for all staff on Wednesday, June 18 from 11 am to noon in the Lakeside auditorium and on Thursday, June 19 from 10:30 to 11:30 am in the West Side auditorium. Both will feature games, prizes, refreshments and entertainment by WVON-DJ Richard Pegue.

Juneteenth (June 19, 1865) is considered the date when the last slaves in America were freed and is celebrated annually in more than 200 cities nationwide.